

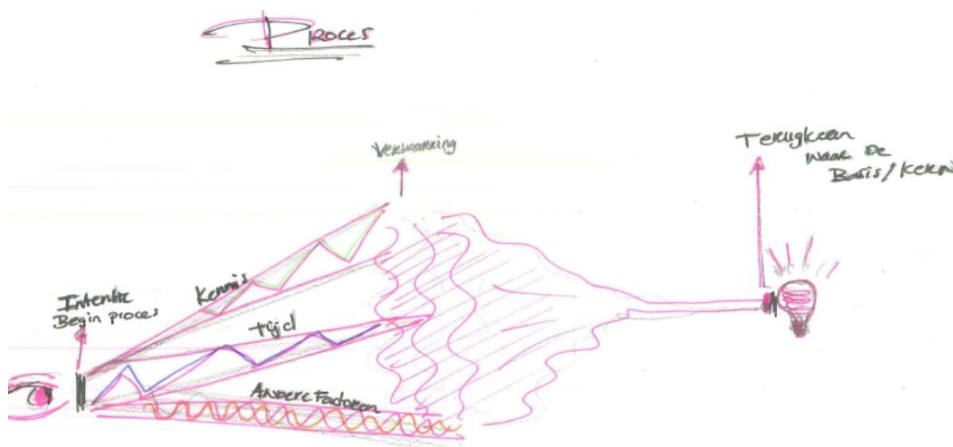
Reflection

M.L. van Es - Studio Westfort Heritage and Architecture
"The challenge of Westfort, continuing a Shared Built Heritage"

One of the most remarkable aspects of the graduation year was that the pre-established goals and intentions, during the year became more and more in the background. This was partly due to the increasing complexity of the design task. The biggest personal challenge was to divide the essentials from the side issues, be selective in making choices and not get lost in the endless source of information. One important element of the graduation process was the discovery that you're creating your own framework and direction. The challenge of the design task was not limited to a redesign of the existing buildings and landscape (to provide further decay of the area), but included a much wider interest. This broader social context means that the design task must be seen within a larger framework (Africa/South Africa) and the current interests and needs should be included in the design to create a certain degree of social cohesion. This is besides the moral issues (poverty, unemployment, AIDS orphans) as well crucial for a sustainable future of the area, because when there is no (logical) sustainable use of the village it will deteriorate rapidly within a short amount of time.

The connection amongst the written research and the design shows this clearly, the research was primarily

focused to find the best treatment for redevelopment of the village, without affect the cultural and historical character. This was done by comparing three positions over time; a more traditional approach, a dialogue with the existing and a more contrasting point of view designing with history. When we observe the current time, contrast is still the most leading direction in architecture, are there other (more subtle) ways of redevelopment? The outcome was that the development of Westfort always has been a continuous response to the current structures, wherefore the original 19th century character can still be felt. Today, an informal community inhabits the former leper institution, this new layer is of value because it became part of the 'spirit' of Westfort. The negative part of this (not really regulated) community is that it's a breeding ground for frictions between residents, mostly because of poverty issues. To create social cohesion an architectural consistency must accelerate and stimulate these developments; *formalizing the informal*. The final design is the creation of a (durable) framework, in which the involvement of existing residents, but also local residents is crucial. Current businesses are bundled in this 'interface' where people should meet and gather. This interface zone forms the transition to the more 'private' orphanage. Eventually, this project shows how small changes can create an immense positive (social) impact; the existing needs and initiatives are often the answer to a new design.



"The road to simplicity (in design and process) was a complex route"